



News Release

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES

NUMBER:
FOR RELEASE: IMMEDIATE

<http://www.dhs.ca.gov>

DATE: April 23, 1999
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STATE UNVEILS LATEST OUTDOOR ANTI-TOBACCO CAMPAIGN
New State Billboards Mark the End of Tobacco Industry
Outdoor Advertisements Nationwide

SACRAMENTO – History was made in California today as state health officials marked the end of tobacco billboard advertising in the United States and unveiled the state’s latest anti-tobacco billboards. At a Sacramento press conference, California Health and Human Services Agency Secretary Grantland Johnson, representing Governor Davis’ Administration, gave the signal, and a new 48- by 20-foot billboard was unveiled atop a popular building in the downtown area. The ad poses the bold question, “Are You Choking on Tobacco Industry Lies?” The billboard is one of six hard-hitting anti-smoking outdoor advertisements that will replace billboards across California that previously promoted tobacco products.

“Today, the state of California takes possession of tobacco industry billboards, which for decades have been used in an attempt to lure people, especially our youth, to an addictive and deadly habit,” said Johnson. “The Davis Administration is committed to winning the war against the tobacco industry and its marketing tactics aimed at our young people. As you recall, Governor Davis was the first private citizen to join in the states’ tobacco lawsuits.” Johnson continued. “The new ads we are launching today will, once and for all, shatter the illusion touted by the tobacco industry that smoking is a healthy, sexy, rugged, and rebellious lifestyle.”

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The Master Settlement Agreement (MSA) between the nation's state attorneys general and the tobacco industry banned tobacco billboard advertising after April 22, 1999. As a provision of the settlement, states may place alternative advertising on the tobacco companies' billboard spaces that are still under contract. The California Department of Health Services is replacing 366 tobacco billboards across the state with new anti-tobacco advertising.

"Our new billboards poignantly remind Californians that the tobacco industry has lied for decades about the health consequences of smoking," said Johnson. "We applaud any reduction in the number of images promoting tobacco in a positive manner. The tobacco industry spends approximately \$500 million annually in California for advertising and promotions, and tobacco companies are very clever in discovering other mechanisms to hook new smokers, especially teenagers."

California's latest advertising campaign released today counters the tobacco industry's positive portrayal of smoking with parodies of famous icons, such as the Marlboro man, and other hard-hitting attacks on the tobacco industry. The outdoor campaign includes four new ads and updated designs of two thought-provoking ads from previous years.

In addition to the billboard unveiled in Sacramento today, the new ads are: "Need to Quit," which promotes the California Smokers' Helpline (1-800-7-No-Butts), a free and confidential counseling and resource service; "Limp Cowboy," which visually shows the scientific fact that smoking is a leading cause of male impotence; and "No Lie," which uses the style and visuals of well-known cigarette advertisements to convey the message that, "500,000,000 people alive today will die from tobacco." The updated ads promote the message that the tobacco industry's only motive is profit. The tagline on the "Coffin" billboard reads: "Tobacco Companies Are Making A Killing Off You."

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“Californians must understand that although this billboard ban is a step in the right direction, it does not put an end to the ongoing problems associated with tobacco marketing,” said Donald O. Lyman, M.D., Chief of the California Department of Health Services' Division of Chronic Disease and Injury Control. “Tobacco use is the number one cause of preventable death in our state. Its unhealthy consequences have destroyed families, hooked our youth with a life-long deadly addiction, and cost California taxpayers \$9 billion a year in smoking-related medical costs.”

Although the removal of outdoor tobacco advertising is only one part of the MSA, it is the most visible sign to date.

One of the most recognized tobacco industry images is the Marlboro Man cowboy. The state's new billboard campaign includes a new 60-foot cowboy to replace the infamous Marlboro Man on Sunset Boulevard in West Hollywood. Unlike the rustic Marlboro Man, who has promoted smoking on the Sunset Strip since 1982, this new cowboy graphically demonstrates that smoking cigarettes is a leading cause of male impotence.

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